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CELESTE THOMAS: My name is Celeste Thomas, and I'm a Las Vegas resident. And I would like to read a short excerpt from the Las Vegas Sun, the local paper here, that I think is very informative and good and brings up a good point. It's very short.

Representative Shelley Berkley, Democrat of Nevada, plans to introduce a bill next week that will divert all spending on the proposed Yucca Mountain project to alternative waste management technology. The bill would immediately funnel this year's proposed 445 million Department of Energy budget for Yucca projects to other studies which would likely include transmutation and reprocessing.

All future spending would be directed to, according to the bill. The total cost of Yucca in the coming years could total 58 billion, officials estimate. The legislation would be a radical departure from Congress' current course. It was not immediately clear today if Berkley's bill would have any support among lawmakers.

Congress designated Yucca Mountain as the nation's nuclear dump in 1987. The Department of Energy has invested 14 years and about \$7 billion studying it.

Yucca plan supporters say that while transmutation and reprocessing would be a supplemental option to Yucca, new technologies would not replace the need for a permanent repository. The bill would allow the Department of Energy to determine where the money would be spent. Options would include transmutation, which is a process that speeds up the breakdown of nuclear waste, as well as reprocessing, which is the recycling of nuclear waste.

President Bush, in his national energy policy, recommended further investigating these alternative technologies as supplements, not alternatives to constructing Yucca Mountain.

Nuclear energy officials are lukewarm about reprocessing used nuclear fuel. Several countries, including France, which relies heavily on nuclear power, reprocesses spent fuel, but the United States has avoided it because of the concerns that the process separates out plutonium which officials worry may fall into the wrong hands.

Officials with the top industry lobby group, the Nuclear Energy Institute, have said reprocessing is not economical and they adamantly back the Yucca plan.

1 [ I would like to submit to the Department of Energy that funding and finding alternatives for burying nuclear waste is our best hope. This is a wise plan for everyone. It's a win/win situation. It would allow the Department of Energy to do its job, which is to take care of our nuclear waste. And it would eliminate the

concerns that citizens have about dangers of burying nuclear waste as opposed to funding alternatives to it. And I would like to submit that we should all focus on finding these alternatives, not a supplement to our plan but the focus of our plan. ☐

Thank you.